NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE
AND COMMUNITIES IN B.C.

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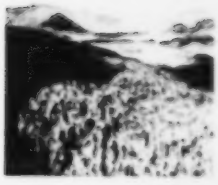
INTRODUCTION



Since 2005 the Province of British Columbia, First Nations, and Aboriginal leaders have focused attention on building positive working relationships. Their efforts reflect a strong commitment to closing the socio-economic gaps that separate Aboriginal people from other British Columbians by 2015.

Both the New Relationship vision and Transformative Change Accord embody this commitment. The New Relationship identifies respect, reconciliation, and recognition of Aboriginal rights and title as the foundation for building on-going relationships between the Province and First Nations. The Transformative Change Accord established a ten-year plan to measure progress in achieving key priorities in five sectors. By signing the Métis Nation Relationship Accord in 2006, British Columbia and Métis Nation BC agreed to work together to address socio-economic gaps.

These documents set formidable goals requiring long-term societal change to achieve. At this point, much remains to be done, but the Province, First Nations, Métis, and Aboriginal organizations in local communities throughout British Columbia are making and measuring their progress.

This report captures that progress, including plans and strategies being implemented by government, First Nations, and Métis, as well as achievements resulting from their efforts. It includes stories of individual Aboriginal people who share their collective experiences about how their lives are improving as a result of these commitments.

"Never before in the history of British Columbia has the government focused this intently on improving its relationship with Aboriginal people. The Province is committed to the New Relationship because, quite simply, it is the right and moral thing to do. We all want to live in healthy and strong communities, and by improving and strengthening our relations with Aboriginal people, we are building a better society that we can all benefit from."

Premier Gordon Campbell

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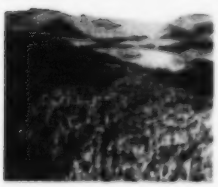
INTRODUCTION



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CROWN – ABORIGINAL RELATIONSHIPS

The New Relationship and Transformative Change Accord fuel a commitment to reconcile a tragic history, resolve outstanding issues, and materially improve the lives of Aboriginal people. For the first time in British Columbia's history, the Province and First Nations are developing government-to-government relationships to achieve agreements that share resources and facilitate decisions.

These improved relationships also enable greater First Nations participation in the management and delivery of child and family services, education, housing and health services.

Following are samples of a growing number of agreements and initiatives that demonstrate commitment to reconcile, recognize and improve relations with Aboriginal people:

- Settled a 150-year land claim by the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations that included the grounds of the B.C. Legislature.
- Replacing four murals in the B.C. Legislature because their subservient depiction of Aboriginal people has long offended First Nations.
- Provided $100 million to the New Relationship Trust for First Nations capacity-building.
- Reached an Agreement-in-Principle with the Tsay Keh Dene Band and the Kwadacha Nation on the impacts of decades of flooding from the Williston Reservoir and Bennett Dam.
- Provided an additional $1.2 million to preserve and promote Aboriginal languages.
- Settled three court cases with the Musqueam Indian Band through a negotiated agreement that will transfer ownership of some land in the Lower Mainland, and provide cash for future economic opportunities.
- Signed the Métis Nation Relationship Accord, agreeing to work with the Métis Nation BC on closing the socio-economic gaps experienced by Métis people.
- Negotiated economic benefits agreements with First Nations that include access to resources and benefits sharing.
- Launched the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program, providing first-hand experience to Aboriginal youth in working with the public service and Aboriginal organizations.
- Developed and adopted a provincial government data standard for the collection of information concerning Aboriginal people that will assist in monitoring and tracking progress on closing the social and economic gaps.
- Announced full support of Jordan's Principle, a child-first approach that commits government to ensuring jurisdictional considerations do not prevent First Nations children from receiving the medical care they need. British Columbia is the first province in Canada to endorse the principle.
- Initiated collaborative work with the First Nations Leadership Council to develop legislation that sets out government's responsibility with respect to Aboriginal rights and title.

The strategy for the future:

Government and Aboriginal communities will continue to work together to foster the fundamentals of a positive new relationship and realize this vision for the future.

The Province is building government-to-government relations with First Nations and honouring commitments to close the socio-economic gaps separating Aboriginal people from other citizens. By developing and implementing policy and legislative changes, British Columbia is improving governance over children and family services, health, education and housing for Aboriginal people.

CROWN – ABORIGINAL RELATIONSHIPS

Recognition of Aboriginal rights through negotiating treaties, economic benefit sharing agreements, strategic land use plans and protocols provides increased certainty and strengthens economic, environmental and social benefits for First Nations communities and Aboriginal people.

Developing local housing options for adult Aboriginal offenders, expanding Aboriginal justice alternatives and providing culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal clients in Vancouver's new downtown community court will lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal people living off-reserve.

In 2008, the Cowichan Tribes will host the North American Indigenous Games providing a platform to showcase the skill, determination and pride of Aboriginal youth. First Nations from across British Columbia and North America will gather in the Cowichan Valley to celebrate their cultures.

Measuring success:

Improving relations with First Nations, Métis people, and Aboriginal communities benefits all British Columbians. Shared decision-making, improved governance, land claim settlements, reconciliation agreements, culture and language preservation plans all work together to support Aboriginal people by:

- Building self-reliance at the local level.
- Improving social and economic conditions for First Nations and Métis.
- Creating capacity to develop healthier, vibrant communities connected to strong regional economies.
- Recognizing the importance of Aboriginal cultures and history.

Success can be measured as more treaties and lasting agreements with First Nations are achieved, and as appreciation, recognition, and respect for Aboriginal cultures grows among all British Columbians.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Brenda Baptiste

"The New Relationship has fostered a climate of collaboration that I believe is unprecedented, certainly in this province, but also in Canada. There seems to be, for the first time, an almost open-door policy when dealing with Aboriginal issues. How great is that?

"When we've had a concern or an issue in First Nations communities or with the Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C., we've really benefited by having access to ministers who make decisions, and having a dialogue in terms of how we deal with issues that will create mutual benefits for the whole province.

"This is how engaged the Province is these days: the Deputy Minister of Tourism sits on our committee. I've been around for a long time, and I've never seen that. When I think about that level of engagement, it's very, very cool. Not only did the Province resource the development of the plan, but it is supporting that process and participating in implementation. Just think about that for a minute. A few years ago, when I was growing up, it was an era of confrontation and fights. Think about that era and this era. It really is night and day."

Brenda Baptiste, President of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia on working with government to develop and implement a multi-year strategy to grow Aboriginal tourism.

Al Edkins

As a Senator for the Métis Nation BC (MNBC) for two years, Al Edkins has seen a lot of changes. When he first took on the voluntary role, MNBC didn't have the resources to finance committees, Senate sittings or to send him to regional meetings. "Predominantly our communications were by word of mouth. Even long distance phone calls were too expensive to make."

In May 2006, the provincial government signed the Métis Nation Relationship Accord, giving the Métis Nation BC added resources to assist with organization funding and support day-to-day workloads, including the Senate, the judicial arm of the Nation.

"We now receive annual funding from the provincial government which allows us, for the first time, to submit fiscally responsible budgets to help cover the costs of Métis Nation BC Senate business," Edkins said. "Being able to meet and work together meant the Senate could draft its own protocols, policies and procedures, code of ethics and bring the Senate Act up to date."

Edkins says the government-to-government status between the Province and MNBC is a direct result of the Métis Nation Relationship Accord.

"The attitude that really stands out to me was the tolerance and respect. With those two particular mindsets established, the Province has respected our culture and traditions, and has begun the process of allowing us to progress into the future."

LAND USE PLANNING

Land use agreements with First Nations clarify government-to-government relationships, provide certainty of access to economic resources, protect environmental values, and respect traditional values, resources and land interests. Working together, the Province and First Nations have achieved a number of important successes in the area of land use planning including:

- Signed Strategic Land Use Planning Agreements for the Central and North Coast of British Columbia, involving 18 First Nations. Collectively, these agreements cover an area of approximately 6.4 million hectares and protect the environment on 1.8 million hectares (more than three times larger than Prince Edward Island), including more than 200,000 hectares of Spirit Bear habit. Legislation to formally designate these areas as conservancies is in place and being planned for the protection of biological diversity, ecosystems, recreational values, and the preservation of First Nations' social, ceremonial, and cultural uses.
- As a follow up to government-to-government negotiations on the Sea to Sky Strategic Land Use Plan, signed land use agreements with Squamish Nation and In-SHUCK-ch Nation. The agreement reached with In-SHUCK-ch Nation establishes cultural management areas and conservancies while providing greater certainty for economic development. The Squamish Nation agreement creates two new conservancies representing over 11,000 hectares, designates most of the Simms Creek valley and part of the Elaho Valley as a wildland zone, and recognizes 22 cultural sites.
- Signed a partnership agreement with the Tsleil Waututh Nation which enabled the initiation of a local plan for the Indian River Watershed, led by Tsleil Waututh Nation to implement the Sea to Sky Land and Resource Management Plan.
- Entered into an agreement with the Nanwakolas Council to create a pilot project that will streamline First Nations referrals and consultation related to natural resource applications with participating First Nations.
- Reached an agreement with communities in the Morice planning area around Houston, including several First Nations, to establish protected areas and designate land open to forestry and mineral exploration. The protected areas include cultural sites important to First Nations in the area.
- Signed a Strategic Land Use Agreement with the Council of the Haida Nation (CHN). Under the plan nearly half of the land base of Haida Gwaii rests within protected areas. The agreement confirms sustainable economic development opportunities and includes a commitment to a sustainable forestry operation of 800,000 cubic metres per year.
- Continuing the Clayoquot Sound Interim Measures Agreements which give First Nations important shared decision-making roles in land and resource planning and management on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The strategy for the future:

The Province will work to enhance government's engagements with First Nations when Crown land and resource decisions affect asserted Aboriginal territories. This includes funding to assist with the costs of First Nations consultation obligations on major project environmental assessments and to ensure the Crown's obligation to consult is met, while providing opportunities to partner with First Nations in many large and small economic development projects.

LAND USE PLANNING

Measuring success:

Government will continue to work with First Nations to ensure that resource development decisions reflect their interests and concerns. First Nations will participate in land use negotiations across the Province and have a strong role in land use decisions.

Aboriginal heritage and cultural links to the landscape will be respected in future land use planning processes.

Richard Hardy

The K'omoks First Nation's connection with the ocean is an ancient partnership forged through centuries on the eastern shore of mid-Vancouver Island. Today it's a link that provides them with an economic development opportunity.

Pentlatch Seafoods Ltd (PSL), the K'omoks First Nation's for-profit corporation, is a successful, award-winning shellfish aquaculture business that grows manila clams and Pacific oysters.

"Since 2002, the K'omoks First Nation has established itself in the shellfish aquaculture industry," said PSL General Manager Richard Hardy. "In 2004, the K'omoks First Nation signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Province, enabling access to 80 hectares of Crown land foreshore for the purposes of shellfish aquaculture."

PSL has under tenure seven inter-tidal sites employing up to 20 workers during the peak harvest season and up to 14 people during the rest of the year. The employees are a diverse group of K'omoks First Nation members, neighbouring First Nations and non-First Nations people.

During its initial stage, PSL implemented an environmental stewardship program that met with the approval of the Elders and Chiefs. In 2005, the company received the Town of Comox Community Service Award, and afterwards, was a finalist for the 2006 Vancouver Mid-Island Science and Technology award for shellfish aquaculture.

As a result of the company's husbandry and harvesting activities, as well as involvement in the BC Shellfish Growers Association's first annual Comox Valley Shellfish Festival in June 2007, PSL won the BC Shellfish Growers Association Business of the Year for 2007.

The primary reason for the corporation's success is a sound governance structure and strategic plan focused on short, medium and long-term goals. While generating revenues over $2 million, PSL has dispersed over 65 million manila clam seeds and 5.6 million Pacific oyster seeds.

Hardy noted that the long term sustainability of PSL will depend on expanding operations. Diversification into other species, such as geoducks, horse clams and cockles is a possibility.

"Consultation concerns of First Nations, as well as environmental concerns, need to be addressed," said Hardy. "Then we can start building strategic alliances and initiating joint ventures with other First Nations and non-Aboriginal companies."

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EDUCATION

Everyone has a right to high quality education. At each stage of life, from childhood to adulthood, how and what we learn impacts our future. Aboriginal children and youth often face challenges and barriers to learning, and experience lower graduation rates and post-secondary success. Creating a supportive and culturally appropriate educational environment for learners builds a foundation for a brighter future.

The provincial government is committed to supporting Aboriginal students at every stage of their education. Since 2005, working with First Nations and Aboriginal organizations, government has strengthened opportunities for learning in the following ways:

- Signed the First Nations Education Jurisdiction Agreement and enacted legislation to recognize First Nations' jurisdiction over on-reserve schools.
- Created, signed and implemented 36 Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements around the province. Through the agreements school boards and Aboriginal communities jointly identify the direction needed to improve the success of Aboriginal students, take steps to reach their shared goals and reflect local Aboriginal culture.
- Announced the $65 million Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy to increase access to post-secondary education by targeting new seats, reducing financial barriers to Aboriginal students through a $10 million endowed scholarship fund, providing funding for capital projects dedicated to Gathering Places and for more culturally relevant programming, services, and curriculum.
- Committed approximately $12 million towards the implementation of three-year Aboriginal Service Plans between 11 public post-secondary institutions and Aboriginal communities to outline goals for Aboriginal learners in terms of access, participation and success, and to implement specific actions to meet these goals.
- Provided grants to help Friendship Centre Societies with enhanced early childhood development programming and family literacy initiatives.
- Funded Aboriginal community-based organizations to develop education and awareness materials and activities to prevent violence against women. Through the Partners in Prevention initiative developed programming to engage Aboriginal men and boys in preventing violence against women.

EDUCATION

The strategy for the future:

First Nations and Métis students will enjoy greater participation and achievement at school through programs and services that help close the educational gaps. Aboriginal students will benefit from a core Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum that includes more Aboriginal content, from more Aboriginal teachers, and from more culturally relevant programs.

Local school boards and Aboriginal community partners continue to work together to develop and implement Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements that help Aboriginal youth achieve education success.

Scholarships are available to reduce financial barriers and help Aboriginal post-secondary students realize their personal and professional goals. Aboriginal Service Plans at post-secondary institutions set specific goals for participation, tracking educational achievement and success of students from both First Nations and Métis communities.

With support for early childhood care and development, strong Aboriginal representation in public education, and by implementing a literacy strategy for Aboriginal families, the educational gap can be narrowed and more Aboriginal youth will use their education to build a brighter future.

Measuring success:

These actions will increase Aboriginal students' abilities to learn through a culturally appropriate curriculum, improved literacy and increased high school and post-secondary participation and achievement. Performance indicators include closing the gap in the highest level of education obtained, school readiness, scores on tests and in courses related to reading, writing and numeracy, and the rate of post-secondary participation. The key indicator of success will be reducing the discrepancy in high school graduation rates by 2015 between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Jessie Nyberg

Success by Six is a province-wide program that works with communities helping children up to age si.. to develop the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical skills they need as they enter school. The Aboriginal Children's Book Project in the North Okanagan is a classic example. Jessie Nyberg is the coordinator with Aboriginal Infant/Early Childhood Development Program, First Nations Friendship Center in Vernon.

"Our project started when we talked to parents of children of Aboriginal ancestry in the North Okanagan, and they identified language as an issue," Jessie explained. "We formed an Aboriginal Table with Success by 6, the Okanagan Friendship Centre, the Okanagan Indian Band and the Spallumcheen Indian Band. We hired an artist and a writer to write books for children aged to six, in the Okanagan and Shuswap languages.

"The benefits for the little children from newborn to three and four years is that they will hear their language and become familiar with it. For the older ones, they will actually learn to speak their language. I believe that speaking the traditional language is as important as speaking English."

Colleen Hannah

Colleen Hannah is the District Principal for Aboriginal Education with Mission Public Schools. She says awareness of Aboriginal students and culture has grown dramatically across the district over the past few years. "There's been a shift in conversation. Instead of me asking teachers if they have an Aboriginal component in their curriculum, now they're coming to our department and looking for Aboriginal culture and traditions that they can build in.

"We're no longer knocking on doors, trying to go to meetings, and fighting to become part of conversation. Now, we are the conversation. Government has made Aboriginal education a priority, so it's becoming a priority for everybody. You hear it everywhere. Rather than asking to be at the table to be part of the conversation, we're at the table to be part of the work."

Hannah says there are many good reasons to be more aware of Aboriginal education, including one that is particularly compelling. "We are the fastest growing population in Canada. Across the district, our numbers are increasing while the number of non-Aboriginal students is declining. If we collectively don't address Aboriginal achievement, we're going to be in big trouble.

"It's now expected that there is an Aboriginal component in our achievement contracts and our school growth plans. It's now expected that we look at the data and make changes for the better for Aboriginal students, and this makes it better for all students. I've noticed that difference. The government isn't asking 'Is there an Aboriginal goal?' It's demanding 'What is your Aboriginal goal?' "

Hannah believes the focus on Aboriginal education is a benefit for all British Columbians. "Now, Aboriginal education is an integral part of our districts, not an add-on piece," she says. "We are all Aboriginal educators. Some of us have Aboriginal ancestry, but we are all responsible for all our children. It doesn't matter who we are, we want all of our children to do better."

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Mike Jimmie

Mike Jimmie is a councilor with the Squiala First Nation near Chilliwack, and a student in the Justice Institute of British Columbia's Pilot Aboriginal Leadership Certificate Program in Community. The post-secondary program is for Aboriginal people in leadership and management roles with an interest in self-governance, treaty negotiations, management and human services. The two-year program is one of the projects under the provincial government's Aboriginal Special Projects Fund.

"I've been a band councilor for 10 years, so a lot of this stuff is really useful," Jimmie said. "I was able to take it to the band office and there was almost instant roll-over of what I was learning."

Jimmie says the timing is perfect for programs like this. "My generation has taken over politics in my community, and we have a more collaborative and inclusive approach, with an open door with the community." And he believes his leadership style is changing as a result of the program. "I'm more understanding of those whom I represent. Instead of being 'I know what's good for you and this is a good deal,' I've learned to listen more and keep my ears open more. I make sure that I carry myself in a respectful way and practise what I preach."

HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Housing and infrastructure are basic needs we often take for granted. However, a disproportionate number of Aboriginal families and individuals in B.C. are in need of housing. Almost 30 per cent of First Nations people living off-reserve live in inadequate housing, or in places that are too expensive and generate financial pressures. One in three homeless people is of Aboriginal descent.

Working with First Nations and Métis organizations, the Province committed to addressing Aboriginal housing needs in the October 2006 Housing Strategy: Housing Matters BC. To date, the following initiatives have been implemented:

- Funded 292 housing units under the $50.9 million Aboriginal Housing Initiative to help address the short-term housing needs for Aboriginal people living off-reserve.
- Launched a new $500,000 Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program with funds distributed equally among eight Aboriginal non-profit organizations across B.C. that connect homeless persons to housing, income assistance, and support services in their communities through an Aboriginal context.
- Engaged in a capacity-building process with the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, the first and only Aboriginal social housing management agency in Canada, in preparation for transferring to it the management of 2,600 off-reserve social housing units.
- Completed an on- and off-reserve housing needs and capacity assessment review. First Nations around British Columbia are providing information about their needs and this input will form the basis of the Province's ten-year Aboriginal Housing Action Plan.
- Committed to more than 2,300 new housing units under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, which will benefit many homeless Aboriginal people.
- Provided funding for Elders' Lodges – assisted living homes for Aboriginal Elders.
- Announced provincial funding for the Stehiyaq Healing and Wellness Village in the Fraser Valley, a place of healing for Aboriginal youth and families from across British Columbia who are addressing histories of trauma, addiction, and mental illness.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The Stó:lô Elders Lodge

The Stó:lô Elders Lodge is a 15-unit assisted living development designed for Aboriginal Elders. The Lodge encourages and celebrates spiritual and cultural traditions through activities like drumming and singing. Elders' food preferences are considered in menus with seasonal wild game, salmon and winter fowl.

"Elders in the community are very important, but unfortunately, some Elders are abused," explained lodge manager Elizabeth Point. "We provide a safe place for these Elders and give them the protection they require. Elders who have lived their life on reserve may have a difficult time adjusting to a new home. When they moved from their home to the Elders' Lodge, staff did what they could to make them feel safe and comfortable, while at the same time giving them the space they need.

"There are a couple residents who still like to attend their traditional activities so we would get someone from the team to bring them to these functions. There is a weekly Coqueleetza Elders lunch every Wednesday. And just the fact the residents get to see Stó:lô Nation staff walk into the building is very uplifting for them. It didn't matter which reserve they came from, we opened this place to ALL First Nations."

The strategy for the future:

Government, First Nations and Métis leaders will continue working together to improve access to housing and the quality of life for Aboriginal people across B.C.

Working in partnership with the First Nations Leadership Council, the provincial government is developing a ten-year Aboriginal Housing Action Plan to improve housing, fight homelessness, and foster home ownership.

First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations will benefit from increased training in how to develop and manage housing infrastructure – part of an overall commitment by government to support capacity-building in local Aboriginal communities.

With the First Nations Technology Council, the federal government, and other partners, Internet connectivity will be brought to communities throughout British Columbia.

Measuring success:

Currently, the core housing need of Aboriginal people is almost twice that for non-Aboriginal citizens.

When Aboriginal families enjoy adequate and stable housing, they have a secure foundation to access higher education, lead healthier lifestyles, and take advantage of increased economic opportunities. As more Aboriginal organizations are able to successfully manage social housing at the community level, fewer Aboriginal families will lack housing.

Performance indicators include measuring the number of new housing units on and off-reserve, water safety, broadband connectivity, and transferring social housing units to the Aboriginal Housing Management Association.

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HEALTH

Access to quality health care and living a healthy lifestyle is something all British Columbians want for themselves and their families. Aboriginal people face serious health challenges: lower life expectancy, higher rates of suicide, diabetes, heart disease, and addiction. The provincial government, working with the First Nations Leadership Council, Métis Nation BC, and Aboriginal organizations, has committed to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people and closing the health gap. Since 2005, working in partnership, we have:

- Launched the first comprehensive Tripartite First Nations Health Plan in Canada, signed by the First Nations Leadership Council, Government of British Columbia, and Government of Canada.
- Hosted the first annual First Nations Health Forum in April 2007 with First Nations participants from across the province. The forum brought together key partners to ensure understanding, raise awareness, and determine how the health plan will be implemented.
- Identified four key areas for action: governance, relationships and accountability; health promotion/ disease and injury prevention; health services; and performance tracking.
- Appointed the Province's first Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor.
- Established the First Nations Health Advisory Committee, part of a new governance structure created to ensure that First Nations have input into decisions affecting their health. The committee involves First Nations, Ministry of Health, health authorities and Health Canada in collaborative decision-making at the highest strategic health planning level.
- Began construction of the Lytton Health Centre with an expected opening in the fall of 2008.
- Funded the First Nations Health Council, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and Métis Nation BC, to support Aboriginal ActNow BC programming.
- Established two interim authorities (Vancouver Island Aboriginal Transition Authority and Fraser Region Interim Aboriginal Authority) to support the further development of the most effective models of service delivery for Aboriginal children and families.
- Streamlined procedures for First Nations people with disabilities, who move on and off-reserve, to easily transition between federal and provincial disability assistance programs.
- Developed the Aboriginal Nursing Strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal nurses practising in the province by encouraging Aboriginal youth to enter nursing careers, supporting the recruitment and retention of nurses of Aboriginal heritage, and increasing the number of Aboriginal communities in B.C. with quality nursing services.

The strategy for the future:

The provincial government, partnering with the First Nations Leadership Council, the federal government, and the Métis Nation BC will continue to take action to improve Aboriginal health outcomes by improving the delivery of health services to Aboriginal people.

Over the next few years the 29 actions of the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan will be implemented. Of particular importance will be building a new governance structure for First Nations health services that is inclusive and involves Aboriginal people participating in health planning for their communities.

This new structure ensures that First Nations have ownership of, and responsibility for, their community health outcomes. In addition, new health care workers will learn about protocols to meet the needs of Aboriginal people through a curriculum specifically designed to improve the delivery of health care. For example, Aboriginal women living in rural communities will benefit from a maternity access project that gives them greater choices for delivering babies in their communities.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

First Nations Community Gardens

The Canim Lake Band does a lot with food. It operates a successful community garden, provides fresh organic produce for Elders and residents, and sells the rest at the 100 Mile House Farmers Market. They built raised garden beds and greenhouses for Elders and people with disabilities, provided seeds and taught them how to grow their own food. They used the food industry to teach traditional food and medicine gathering and preservation, as well as job readiness skills. They also operate a community kitchen that is the backbone of every social event on the reserve, including celebrations, high school graduations, wakes and funerals, Christmas parties, the annual, two-week community clean-up in the spring, as well as workshops and treaty meetings.

Pam Theodore is the band's land administrator and a believer in the theory that healthy food makes for a healthy community. "There is a high level of diabetes and pre-diabetes among our people on reserve," she says. "That was one of the main reasons we received support from the government to do this, by explaining how this project will give our people healthy alternatives and the ability to supplement their diet with vegetables and fruits, instead of starches and carbs."

The program is the First Nations Community Food Systems for Healthy Living. Canim Lake is one of many bands that have received provincial funding through Act Now BC. Theodore says the program is benefiting younger generations. "People don't realize how much sugar is in processed foods. The label might not say sugar, but it may have fructose or other forms of sugar. We're learning healthy eating habits. Band members are becoming more aware of the effects of bad eating habits, including sugar use, and the benefits of replacing them with fresh fruits and vegetables."

Theodore says gardening has really caught on in the community. "I have two raised garden beds, and two greenhouses. My family really enjoys fresh produce, and my husband and I are really hooked now."

Aboriginal children under the age of six, living on and off-reserve, will receive hearing, dental and vision screening. A fully-integrated telehealth network, which uses communications technology to deliver health services, will provide access to specialty services in rural and remote communities, and improve the capacity of local health care providers to deliver services. Through the implementation of the Aboriginal Mental Health and Addictions Plan, culturally appropriate addictions beds/units for Aboriginal patients will be provided. Annual funding of $10 million will support new dedicated mental health services for Aboriginal children and youth.

Measuring success:

In order to track progress on closing the gap in health outcomes, the First Nations Health Plan identifies seven performance indicators: life expectancy at birth; mortality rates (deaths due to all causes); youth suicide rates; infant mortality rates; prevalence of diabetes; childhood obesity; and practising, certified First Nations health care professionals. Other key indicators include the measurement of new and improved health governance, management, and service delivery relationships at all levels.

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Victoria Pruden

Victoria Pruden, the Director of Women for Métis Nation BC, sees the value of signatures. When the Government of British Columbia and the Métis Nation BC signed the Métis Nation Relationship Accord in May 2006, Pruden says it made an immediate and definite impact on the Nation's ability to do its work.

"The Accord is allowing us to set benchmarks for Métis-specific data, and we really need that," she said. "One of the gaps we experience as Métis is higher prenatal alcohol consumption and tobacco use among Métis women than non-Aboriginal women. The financial support that's flowing through the accord is assisting us with an opportunity to do focus groups with Métis women across B.C. to determine what kind of information products we can use to support Métis maternal health."

Pruden is also working with the Ministry of Community Services on issues around women and girls who experience violence. "There is very little Métis-specific work being done in the area of violence against Métis women and girls. Their experience may be very different than First Nations women living on reserves, for example. The more we can document the information and come together as a community the more we can help women and girls who have experienced trauma."

A third health initiative is a Métis-specific Act Now BC project to develop active living programs with a traditional Métis approach.

Pruden says she has seen a tremendous change in the relationship between the provincial government and the Métis since 2005.

"It is very positive. It has moved forward, and we are finding ourselves in a place of acceptance and mutual respect, much more than ever before," she says. "We're also seeing that ripple out into other government departments, that are now recognizing us and saying that the Métis Nation Relationship Accord really means something. The level of mutual respect is increasing."

Measuring success: (continued)

Disease prevention, chronic disease management, improved lifestyle choices, education, culturally sensitive programs, access to better and more timely services, increased support for addictions and other mental health issues, all support better health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

However, better health services and prevention programs can only contribute so much to closing the health gap. Increased education, higher income and better housing are also critical to achieving the desired health outcomes.

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ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

British Columbia is experiencing unprecedented economic growth. Employment rates are at historically high levels and many communities across the province are enjoying record levels of prosperity and development. Since 2005, the provincial government, working with First Nations and Métis organizations, has focused on building capacity so that all Aboriginal people and communities can benefit from economic and employment opportunities. Some examples include:

- Economic benefit agreements with five Treaty 8 First Nations (Blueberry River, Fort Nelson, Prophet River, Doig River and West Moberly) that provide over $27 million in equity to facilitate First Nation participation in land and resource management, including the oil and gas industry, and an annual share of resource revenues from $4.3 to $16.6 million. These agreements will promote economic stability in the region.
- Sharing over $196 million in forestry revenue and access to almost 32 million cubic metres of timber.
- An agreement with the Osoyoos Indian Band setting out a revenue sharing framework for the development of Crown lands as part of the expansion of the Mt. Baldy Ski Resort, benefiting the bands from real estate development and employment opportunities.
- Contributed $30 million to the Coast Opportunities Fund directed toward economic development opportunities for First Nations businesses involved in activities including sustainable fisheries, forestry and tourism along the central and north coast.
- Developed a plan to assess and help manage the impacts of the mountain pine beetle infestation by providing $8.4 million to the First Nations Forestry Council.
- Developed cooperative arrangements with First Nations in mining activities.
- Negotiated agreements with First Nations to share Crown land revenues from major resort proposals.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Provided $5 million to Aboriginal Tourism BC for the first provincial Aboriginal cultural tourism strategy to be developed in Canada. The strategy will support a strong and sustainable Aboriginal cultural tourism industry for B.C.
- Contracted with the BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society to provide specialized employment services for Aboriginal persons with disabilities.
- Released a joint report with the First Nations Leadership Council outlining key factors for successful engagement in the economy, using 11 First Nations communities in B.C. as case studies.
- Provided specialized and employment-focused services to address the unique employment and training issues of Aboriginal persons with disabilities through the Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities.
- Expanded the BladeRunners Program in Prince George, delivered by the Métis Nation BC, to train at-risk youth for jobs in the construction industry.

The strategy for the future:

Government will support the First Nations Leadership Council's Economic Development Strategy to build self-reliance, prosperity and economic stability in First Nations communities.

Business arrangements and economic opportunities between First Nations, government, and the private sector will continue to increase.

Access to education and skills training and development through initiatives such as Bladerunners, mobile training facilities for trades, and youth entrepreneurial training will help young people enter the construction and trades industries, and develop skills, employability and self-employment.

The Province will double the number of Aboriginal apprentices and trainees in trades by 2010 by implementing the Aboriginal Trades Strategy.

Through the Four Host Nations Secretariat, the Province will facilitate the participation and inclusion of First Nations in opportunities leading up to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, showcasing British Columbia's unique Aboriginal cultures and history to the world.

Measuring success:

Support for First Nations and Métis people as they embrace their entrepreneurial traditions and engage in economic activity is essential. Reducing unemployment among Aboriginal people (currently over twice the rate of non-Aboriginal people), increasing the number of Aboriginal entrepreneurs, and increasing employment income constitute key performance indicators to measure success.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Lyle Bolton

Lyle Bolton is the General Manger with Kalum Ventures, a First Nations company fully owned and operated by the Kitsumkalum Band membership near Terrace. Three years into its Forest and Range Agreement, Bolton says the band is definitely benefiting from the economic stability and growth the agreement with the Province provides.

"The people in Kitsumkalum were not involved in any of the profits or economic opportunities being generated. Now, we're involved, and we are trying to be good stewards of the land out here. Having access to the land base is a key part of the Kitsumkalum Band's planning for its economic future. We've had as many as ten people from the band working now. We set up Kalum Ventures so we could get out and manage our own harvesting. It was a steep learning curve, but we had lots of help, and now we're going great. It's time to start looking further down the road, and figuring out other opportunities and ventures that we may want to start up in the future.

"Kalum Ventures is an important part of the band's plans, and the Forest and Range Agreement was a foundation. If we didn't have it, we wouldn't have succeeded to the point where we are now."

Jermaine Joseph

Mining and mining exploration are hot industries in northern B.C. these days. The challenge is building bridges between an industry desperate for good workers and First Nations communities keen to benefit from the boom.

Enter the Reclamation and Prospecting Program, developed by Northwest Community College and funded in part by the provincial government. The pilot provided on-the-job training in mineral prospecting, site evaluation, and bush safety to First Nations youth, giving them a chance to discover if they liked the work and get hands-on experience for a resume.

Jemaine Joseph signed onto the program in the summer of 2007, and says it has given him a whole new career.

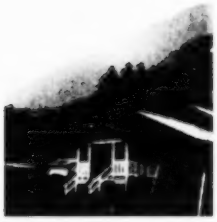
"I worked with an education centre on the reserve. I worked in the mill and in the bush for a few years. I even got into carpentry, but it wasn't for me. I know mining is going to be for me," he said. "I really feel good about it."

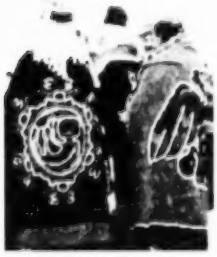
Chris Basil

Chris Basil is the vice-president of Coast Mountain Geological, a mining company with interests in northern British Columbia. He hired Jermaine and several other program graduates right away, and is thrilled with the results.

"It has really been wonderful to be able to hire people who are fresh and keen to get going with their new training. Looking ahead 10 years, First Nations will be major players in the mining and exploration business – not only as trained and experienced technical staff, but in all aspects – drilling, geology, geoteching – you name it."

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES





George Speck:

George Speck, Senior Administrator for Namgis First Nation at Alert Bay and Chairman of the Board for Orca Sand and Gravel Ltd., sees success in the faces of band members employed at the busy Orca Quarry near Port McNeill on the eastern shore of northern Vancouver Island.

He smiles a lot to himself, too, when he thinks about the revenue stream the band's 12 per cent equity partnership in the gravel pit will realize in a few short years, to the benefit of the whole community.

"There's a tremendous sense of optimism about the project," Speck says of the venture between Namgis First Nation, Kwakiutl Indian Band, and Polaris Minerals Corp. Speck notes that Polaris approached the band in 2001 about exploration for aggregate deposits. The solid relationship established with the company led to a formal agreement in 2005 to develop the quarry, currently employing about 30 people, including eight Namgis First Nation members.

"There are many positives for the community," says Speck. "A young Namgis First Nation woman is now working as a heavy equipment operator, while another is training to be a welder. These personal successes are about more than pay checks; they're about self-esteem, positive role models for our youth, and hope for the future."

Speck explained that Namgis First Nation is currently re-paying Polaris for the financing put forward by the company that enabled the band to acquire its part ownership in the quarry. After that obligation is paid off in four to six years, Namgis First Nation will realize between $5 million and $7 million in profit-sharing – a sum equal to almost half the band's current yearly revenue, derived almost totally from the federal government.

"Our share of the quarry revenue will help us provide education, health, and training resources for our people," said Speck. "We will be able to invest in other ventures and become really integrated into the regional economy."

As the business grows, Namgis First Nation and Kwakiutl Indian Band members will share equally in half of the projected 50 jobs the quarry will support, thanks to the fact that the partnership with Polaris includes both a benefits and a business agreement.

Kwakiutl Indian Band Chief Councillor Verna Chartrand says the employment generated by the project benefits the community.

Orca Quarry has a lifespan of about 25 to 30 years, but Speck notes there are other sites in the area that could also be developed for rock and gravel. He is confident that the project will help diversify the economy and strengthen the community.

TREATIES

In 2007, the Province and six B.C. First Nations achieved historic treaty success by reaching final agreements for the first urban treaty in Canada (Tsawwassen First Nation) and the first modern-day treaty on Vancouver Island with the Maa-nulth First Nations (including Huu-ay-aht, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h', Toquaht, Uchucklesaht Tribe, and Ucluelet First Nations). These treaties are the first to be negotiated and ratified under the B.C. Treaty Commission process.

For members of these First Nations, the road proved long and arduous, but the journey was crowned by success. A dramatic moment came when the chiefs addressed the Legislative Assembly – a rarely granted opportunity. The chiefs spoke eloquently, identifying their Final Agreements with hopes for a brighter future for their people.

Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement:

- Includes a land component of 724 hectares and a capital transfer of $13.9 million over 10 years.
- Provides responsibilities and rights to the Tsawwassen including self-governance over their land, members and resources.
- Defines a range of powers and responsibilities in areas including taxation, and hunting and fishing rights that will enable Tsawwassen First Nation to build a self-reliant future.

Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement

- Includes a 24,550-hectare land package and a $73.1 million capital transfer over ten years distributed among the five Maa-nulth First Nations.
- Creates opportunities in fishing and forestry that will support economic development.
- Sets out terms of governance, with each of the Maa-nulth First Nations having a constitution providing for a government that is democratically elected by and financially accountable to the Maa-nulth communities.

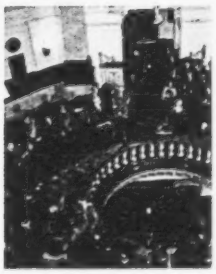
The strategy for the future:

- The Province will support fast-tracked treaty negotiations at common tables, as suggested by the B.C. Treaty Commission and First Nations. The common table is a forum for parties to address obstacles common to all treaty tables, and develop solutions that can then be applied to specific negotiations.
- Two-thirds of all Aboriginal people in the province are represented at one of 47 on-going treaty negotiations. Forty First Nations are at stage four, working toward an Agreement-in-Principle.
- Final agreement negotiations are on-going with Sliammon Indian Band, Yale First Nation, Yekooche First Nation, and In-SHUCK-ch Nation.
- B.C. will pursue incremental treaty agreements that allow First Nations and government to come to agreement on specific areas that would be included in a treaty, and implement those agreements while continuing to negotiate the broader treaty. First Nations reap the benefits of negotiations sooner.

Measuring success:

- Treaties will help First Nations take major steps forward on the road to self-reliance, prosperity, and reconciliation, and allow them to abandon the constraints of the outdated *Indian Act*. Successful treaty negotiations will result in recognition of Aboriginal rights and title, establishing First Nations ownership and management of lands and resources.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES



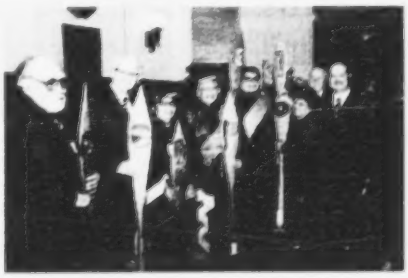
"For the Tsawwassen people, this a time of great hope and optimism. This treaty achieves a new relationship between Tsawwassen First Nation, British Columbia, and Canada. It achieves reconciliation, and I mean true reconciliation."

"To me, reconciliation signifies real action and tangible change. True reconciliation is the product of this treaty."

"Our people have waited for well over 100 years for this moment. I like to think that our ancestors would be proud."

"Today true reconciliation also means access to financial resources and economic opportunities that will be used for infrastructure development."

Tsawwassen First Nation Chief Kim Baird speaking to the Legislative Assembly upon introduction of the Tsawwassen First Nation Final Agreement Legislation



"Premier Campbell made a speech about hope, and hope is what our people are looking for. Hope is so important." Hereditary Chief Bert Mack, Toquaht Nation.

"We entered this modern-day treaty with a goal in mind – to make life better for our people. We wanted to see more of our children educated. We wanted to see more of our people earning a meaningful income within their homeland. Today we hope those things can become a reality." Chief Councillor Robert Dennis, Huu-ay-aht First Nations.

"The Maa-nulth treaty is an expression of our vision of the future. It is a vision that permits us to see a future filled with opportunities. It is a vision that permits us to move forward and leave the pain of the past behind." Chief Councillor Charlie Cootes, Uchucklesaht Tribe

"With the Maa-nulth Final Agreement, we affirm the old traditions and make new beginnings. There is renewed hope for the future as we embrace the principles that unite and lead us onward." Chief Councillor Vi Mundy, Ucluelet First Nation.

"I must begin by saying that we Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' are not without feelings. We are a sensitive people. We love the sea and the land that have always supported us and provided us with a rich lifestyle. The profits of all resource extraction in our traditional territories must benefit our communities." Chief Councillor Tess Smith, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations.

Chiefs of the five Maa-nulth First Nations speaking to the Legislative Assembly upon introduction of the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement Legislation.

CONCLUSION

The Province's commitment to close the gaps by 2015 in education, economic opportunities, health, and housing is anchored in the New Relationship and the Transformative Change Accord, developed in consultation with the First Nations Leadership Council and based on mutual respect, reconciliation, and recognition of Aboriginal rights and title. The Métis Nation Relationship Accord further demonstrates B.C.'s commitment to strengthen the socio-economic status of Métis people in British Columbia.

Aboriginal people, communities, and organizations are making real progress toward closing the socio-economic gaps that have separated them from other British Columbians for far too long. By making more of their own decisions and having a greater share of the benefits of British Columbia's economic growth, Aboriginal people are becoming more self-reliant.

Vibrant culture will help restore hope and instill confidence in Aboriginal communities. First Nations and Métis organizations are working with the Province to preserve their languages and their unique heritage. Aboriginal people are witnessing a cultural revival that will foster a sense of identity, achievement and pride.

Educated Aboriginal youth, proud of their cultural heritage, and trained with skills to earn a good living, will be able to take full advantage of increased economic opportunities. Living in better housing and leading healthier lives, Aboriginal families can provide the security and stability to give their children a firm foundation to build productive and satisfying lives.

The Province of British Columbia acknowledges the vision and commitment of First Nations and Métis leaders from across B.C.. They are forging a path forward towards a brighter future for their communities. All British Columbians will benefit from this achievement.

Visit www.gov.bc.ca/arr for a performance measurement framework that identifies specific targets to close the socio-economic gaps between Aboriginal people and other British Columbians.

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